

**Statement of Senator Trent Lott
Pipeline Safety Act Reauthorization Hearing
May 11, 2000**

I would like to congratulate the Chairman for holding this hearing and his commitment to reauthorize the Pipeline Safety Act.

Congress is reviewing the DOT's pipeline safety program in the emotional aftermath of a tragic pipeline accident in Bellingham, WA. Today we will hear from the families of the victims. It is very fitting that they should be here to remind us of the seriousness of our efforts. We will also hear from the Office of Pipeline Safety & the pipeline industry about their proposals to prevent future pipeline tragedies. My home state of Mississippi has a large pipeline presence, and I commend the Chairman for his attention to this issue.

Oil and natural gas pipelines are of fundamental importance to all Americans. Pipelines are essential to the basic infrastructure of our economy. Millions

of Americans depend on the fuels and raw materials transported by pipelines. Americans would not have the productivity or the quality of life we have without pipelines. Pipeline transportation of oil and gas is not only convenient and economical, it is usually very, very safe.

As Congress considers reauthorization of the Pipeline Safety Act, we must look at the whole picture. Measures to increase safety must be well coordinated to prevent unnecessary conflicts with the interstate movement of materials due to the different regulatory efforts.

Reauthorization efforts must aim to provide for the continued safe operation of this essential infrastructure system. The basic responsibility for interstate pipeline transportation lies with the federal government. While there are certainly local concerns that need to be addressed in some fashion, only the federal government can bring consistency to rules that govern the operation of pipelines crossing state lines.

There is a potential for good bipartisan legislation. It is Congress's responsibility to ensure that both the safety and integrity of the entire pipeline system is upheld.

I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses.